THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

August/September 2022 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

Mass Shootings

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

One of the deadliest US mass school shootings of the twentieth century happened April 20, 1999 at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. In less than twenty minutes, Eric Harris, 18, and David Klebold, 17, killed twelve students and a teacher and wounded 21 others before killing themselves. Our oldest child was fourteen at the time, our youngest only four. I remember well conversations with my mother friends, the fear and fury we felt. And the shock.

What was once terrifyingly unusual has become terrifyingly frequent. The Gun Violence Archive, an independent collection organization, defines a mass shooting as one in which four or more people are fatally shot, excluding the shooter. The archive has documented more than 200 in 2022 so far. Twenty-seven occurred in schools.

When I last wrote about guns for this publication, the country was in the early days of a global pandemic and reeling from the police killing of George Floyd. The uncertain times prompted some Americans to purchase guns. Lots of them. More than four million were legally sold in June 2020 alone. We are now seeing the consequences of that frenzied buying as our public spaces become unpredictably hazardous. Heavily armed men, the elderly and middle-aged, as well as the young, are randomly killing people in parking lots, grocery stores, schools, hospitals, churches, along parade routes, and in shopping malls. Despite this ominous development, the US Supreme Court recently ruled against states that restrict who may carry a gun in public.

People who live in countries with far lower gun casualty rates than ours wonder why we don't object to the killing of our own people, especially when the victims are children. We do object. Nearly 60% of Americans — 87% of Democrats and 37% of Republicans — think we need stronger gun control. During these past few months as gun massacres have occurred with breathtaking frequency, Americans from all walks of life have denounced lawmakers for their inaction, *begged* for change, and called out those who consider the Second Amendment sacrosanct.

"The right to bear arms does not eclipse the right to life, or the right of all Americans to go about their lives free of the fear that they might be shredded by bullets at any moment. Gun violence is a life issue," said Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, archbishop of Chicago, the day after yet another young man, armed with a weapon of war, fatally shot six people watching a Fourth of July parade in Highland Park, Illinois and wounded many more.

Yet there is not denying that over the past several years, the pro-gun voices have become more brazenly menacing,

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Law and Abortion

Social collectives institute rules which limit individual freedom to promote fairness and safety. Dividing participants into leagues with similar abilities allows everyone an equal chance to compete in sports. Prohibiting dangerous behavior like grabbing an opponent's facemask in football saves lives. Rules for fair working conditions and pay, banning discrimination, and providing equal political participation, fall in the same category as rules for safe driving and against smoking in public places. In a sense, these rules promote justice and peace.

Laws with severe consequences are intended to discourage the mot serious threats to safety and fairness, like theft, rape, and murder. The deprivation of personal freedom is proportionate to the threat to fairness and safety. To prevent a fender-bender, drivers are asked to wait a minute or two at a traffic light. To prevent sexism or racism, men and white people are asked to make space for women and people of color. To prevent the spread of potentially fatal disease, people are asked to wear face-masks, get vaccinated, and/or quarantine during a pandemic. To deter or respond to lethal military action by other nations, many governments compel some citizens to join the military, to kill on command, and to risk injury or death.

At the present time, since the United States does not have a military draft, no citizen is asked to risk his or her life for fairness or security. The decision to take that kind of risk is voluntary. Running into a burning building to save lives or standing in front of an armed intruder to protect the innocent is admirable, but not compulsory.

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Shootings

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immoral, and blasphemous.

After the massacre at Columbine in 1999, the National Rifle Association (NRA) cancelled its annual convention scheduled to be held in Denver, Colorado. The organization showed no such deference this year. Days after an 18-year-old boy, armed with an AR-15-style weapon, killed nineteen fourth graders and two teachers at the Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, the NRA held its annual convention in the city of Houston located less than 300 miles away. "14 Acres of Guns and Gear" read the huge banner that hung from Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center while across the street protesters chanted, "NRA, Assassino! Assassino!"

Ryan Busse, a former executive with firearms manufacturer Kimber America, writes about the moral devolution of the gun industry in his new memoir **Gunfight: My Battle Against the Industry that Radicalized America**. Busse says that for years, firearms manufacturers adhered to a code of conduct regarding their marketing practices. Tactical gear like the kind the Buffalo shooter wore could not be displayed or advertised in the main sections of trade shows. There was no advertising meant to incite political violence, no fusion of firearm possession with right-wing ideologies or Christian nationalism.

Such taboos no longer hold, Busse says. Today, tactical gear is openly marketed at gun shows and widely advertised on social media. Firearms are trademarked with names like "Urban Super Sniper." Ads for AR-15s promise the owner will "get their man card back," and anyone can buy truckloads of high-capacity magazines with the moniker "Let's Go Brandon" or "Lock Her Up." Around the time of the January 6th Insurrection, Donald Trump Jr. tweeted a photo of himself holding an AR-15. The moniker on its magazine showed a jailed Hillary Clinton, emblazoned on the gun's handle, a Christian Crusader's Cross.

Most shocking of all are the advertising tactics of Daniel Defense, maker of the guns the 18-year-old used to kill all those children in Uvalde. Eight days before the massacre, the company ran an ad, which it has since taken down, that showed a photograph of a small boy cradling an AR-15 in his lap, an ammunition clip beside him. Accompanying the image is a passage from the Book of Poverbs: "**Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it**."

While Moses was up on Mount Sinai experiencing the great theophany, the Israelites down below lost perspective. They forgot Yahweh's covenant with them. Fed up with desert uncertainty, they melted gold from the earrings of women, cast an effigy of a calf, and called it God. When Moses descended from his divine communion, he found the people dancing around the golden calf, enthralled with an idol of their own making. Their apostasy so enraged him, he smashed and burned the calf, then ground it into a powder which he scattered on the water and made the Israelites drink.

We need a Moses moment now to smash through the thrall guns have on American life. I am not advocating forcing anyone to drink water scattered with the dust of ground firearms, although I would like to personally break every AR-15 in the country. All forty million of them.

One activist pastor urges we make gun control a litmus test of the mid-term elections. While I agree with her sense of political urgency, I think our troubles run deeper than politicians corrupted by the gun lobby. Individual Americans are gunning up. We need to ask our brothers and sisters why they feel compelled to do so. What enemy deserves the obliterating death of an AR-15?

We need to also challenge the preachers of fear who, to quote Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas, "have sacralized instruments of death." And we need to confront the economics of this violence as Zach Conine, treasurer for the state of Nevada, is doing. In early June, he announced Nevada would divest from businesses involved in the manufacture or sale of assault weapons. Conine said his office was "unwilling to bear the moral risk of having investments that profit from the creation of a thing that is killing people."

"It's a big country," my brother reminds me, which is why we need not one, but many, Moses moments. I understand the prophet's fury. That encounter with God on Mount Sinai revealed the truth we keep ignoring or denying. God wants us to choose life not death. LIFE. Ω

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Catholic Priests

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

We have come a long way from 1944, when Bing Crosby played Father Charles O'Malley in the musical/drama *Going My Way*. Back then, a priest would be portrayed as a likeable character.

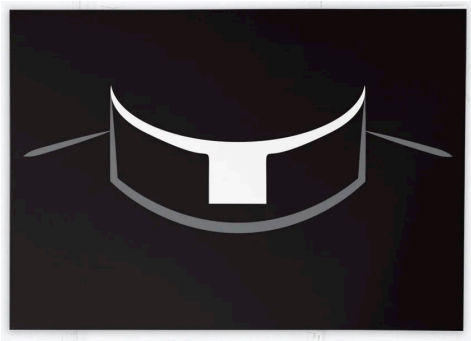
In the last scene of the 1973 film, *The Excorcist,* Father William O'Malley, SJ, playing Father Dyer, is hugged by Linda Blair as soon as she spots his Roman collar. To her character, a Catholic priest is a holy person protecting her from evil.

Revelations about clergy sex abuse shattered this perception. The horrible betrayal of the vow of celibacy and the trust placed in them by children and their parents, caused many to leave the Catholic Church. As the scandal grew, it became clear that too many bishops shielded known abusers. The chance of someone hugging a priest at the sight of his Roman collar dwindled. People wondered if the majority of priests were abusers.

Interestingly, according to an extensive study produced by John Jay College for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, about four percent of priests in ministry between 1950 and 2002 were accused of sexual abuse. In contrast, 41% of American marriages end in divorce. While priestly fidelity to vows is higher, abusive priests are not generally considered bad apples in a mostly good basket.

A general drop in enthusiasm for organized religion has also contributed to a drop in respect for clergy. While there are many causes for this decline, some attributable to a failure of religion to remain relevant to many, a high point in American religious participation coincided with the economic high point for working Americans. In the early 1970s, a family of four could be supported via earnings from a single parent working a 40-hour work week. To do so now requires 90 or more hours between two parents with considerable child-care costs. This drastic decline in the standard of living might prompt some people to devote diminished time off from work exclusively to recreation. The consequently more materialistic life, devoid of the spiritual and mystical, has costs not only for clergy but for everyone, especially in times of crisis, illness, and death.

As a cradle Catholic, I knew my share of priests growing up and as a student at the College of the Holy Cross. As a member of Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker, I've met many more priests. Until the pandemic shut us down, we supported our community largely through bake sales in a different parish each weekend. I often attended every Saturday and Sunday Mass.



I heard hundreds of homilies, had private conversations with, and went to confession to most of the priests in our diocese and even a few outside it.

Five priests I knew were accused of sexual abuse. All were removed from ministry, two convicted and jailed, but the rest left in limbo on the basis of 30-year-old charges that could neither be proved nor disproved.

Besides the possibility that some accusations of abuse are untrue, the impact on the standing of those priests who remain is considerable. Think for a minute how demanding a priestly vocation is. Without the comfort of a spouse or even another priest in most parishes, Catholic pastors have to administer the sacraments, comfort the sick, bury the dead, and give hope to anyone who comes to their church or rectory. They cannot hang up their Roman collars after a nine to five workday or 40-hour work week. They are virtually always on call and under a microscope.

In spite of these challenges, I have had the privilege to know an enormous number of saintly priests, individuals with good humor, compassion, respect for women and all lay people, and with a post-Vatican II conviction that peace and justice are central to the Gospel. Their steadfast faith has often steered me clear of cynicism and despair. Their conviction that bread and wine literally become the Body and Blood of Christ instills in me a hopeful belief in divinity during dark days. Countless times, priests have bailed our Catholic Worker house out of jams which seemed terminal. Some priests have stood with us on picket lines and even joined us in nonviolent civil disobedience. All of them offer us communion with the Body of Christ in church and here at the Catholic Worker alongside the homeless we serve. The Mass provides us a steady anchor in the face of personal challenges, bitter political divisions, the pandemic, climate change, and war.

Saint Francis of Assisi, one of our patron saints, once said: "If I were to meet at the same time some saint coming down from heaven and any poor little priest, I would first pay my respects to the priest and proceed to kiss his hands first. I would say, 'Ah, just a moment Saint Lawrence, because this person's hands handle the Word of Life and possess something that is more than human. These hands have touched my Lord, and no matter what they be like, they could not soil Him or lessen His virtue."

Dorothy Day wrote in 1968, "As a convert, I never expected much of the bishops," but she later wrote of priests in her diary: "We go to him as we would go to a physician to remedy the pain of our bodies, and surely the pain of our souls."

Dorothy and Francis did not excuse priestly vice, but, like Graham Greene in **The Power and the Glory**, they recognized holiness even in broken vessels. The long-suffering world needs holiness and the grace that makes it possible. God bless the priests who so generously share both gifts with us all. Ω

Reflections on Prison

by Richard Deeds

I am thinking that 42 years on the wrong side of prison bars should have taught me a lesson or two worth sharing with free society, but where to begin? That crime does not pay? Oh, it pays, all right. For example, it pays the Director of the Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC) particularly—ridiculously—well. Consequently, each new NDOC Director sets up shop consciously intending not to get fired for at least three years, which is how long it takes to bump up their pension check for the rest of their lives. Hired from out-of-state, a new director needs to hang on for five years to become vested in the state's pension plan. In either case, the established strategy of appearing to serve the public interest is that of keeping prisoners in Nevada locked inside their prison cells. You know—warehoused. It seems to work.

Crime also pays big money to the veritable army of bureaucrats which has come to occupy the innumerable administrative positions which have come to exist throughout the NDOC, even though this army is in no way actually needed to effectively manage Nevada's prisons. Oh, they would all whoop and holler to the contrary, but I watched this army come into being, and before it did so both prisoners and the public were far better served.

Crime also pays a slightly smaller army of prison psychologists extremely well, and mostly to shuffle papers about. In lieu of counseling prisoners, which seems to be prohibited, each psychologist need only conduct yearly anger management classes, teaching prisoners that before losing their tempers it can be helpful to slowly count to ten. You know, real cutting edge stuff.

Crime does not pay prisoners, certainly. We must work for free, or else remain locked inside our prison cells. This is how Nevada rolls, nowadays.

Did you know that prison serves as a barometer capable of telling you most of what is wrong with free society? You will believe me to be exaggerating, but that is not the case. Alas, this is why no one pays any real attention. They do not want to know. For example, the Nevada Legislature has no interest in uncovering the real reason why prisoners committed the criminal offenses that landed them in jail, because it has no interest in doing anything to address them. It prefers for history to repeat itself, however tragically. Not to digress, but might there be any greater abdication of responsibility?

As a microcosmic barometer of free society's failings, prison reliably informs you of one thing most of all, that it is as individuals that we are all most easily manipulated, exploited, and made to work against our best interests. Individuals as opposed to what? As opposed to who we really are.

At the core of our being exists an uncertain perception of the ideal which draws us ever forward in our lives, one which is common to all, even atheists who might strenuously object to the characterization. However differently it is perceived, this ideal influences us in all we do in as many different ways as there are people, as we gain and accumulate both experience and knowledge by which we are made to better serve its purpose. It cannot be diagrammed nor even described all that well, much less held accountable for the detours taken by individuals such as Stalin and Hitler. Christians think this ideal is God. My own sense is that this ideal represents to each of us our ultimate personal fulfillment as human beings, whether or not in a heavenly way. Short of this ideal, or in the near term, we approach this ideal to best effect in the company of others similar to ourselves in outlook and sometimes appearance, notwithstanding how certain groups are know to pursue purely hateful objectives, instead. Hey—even Christians have been known to require correction, the Spanish Inquisition comes quickly to mind. In each other's company, Christians nonetheless remain more greatly focused on their mutual objective, teaching and learning from each other as they would otherwise not. This is nothing but good.

My point is that Christians, Muslims, Jews, Blacks, whites, and just plain human beings are as individuals too easily cut from the herd and made weak, and not by accident. Such is the decree of the US Supreme Court, whose priorities are its own. As to whether we are rightfully individuals or not, that is for each of us to decide from one moment to the next, is it not?

Paroled after 42 years in prison, I went to Las Vegas, Nevada, where the homeless and mentally ill publicly abound, and the people who matter stay inside their cars until safely at work and then home again. Using public buses, I promptly discovered Las Vegans live in fear of each other as like riders in the New York subway system before Charles Bronson went vigilante. Las Vegas, where the only sense of community comes with a locked metal gate. Las Vegas, where I came to miss prison just a tiny bit.

No matter how you define yourself, it is personal autonomy of which we are most in need. Autonomy as Christians living a Christian life, as Muslims, Jews and members of different races. As individuals, we neither live with each other nor learn from each other as we should. We just pay taxes, and cancel out each other's votes.

So yes, 42 years in prison came with a few lessons. Prisons waste much of your money on personnel who contribute nothing of value, even as they prevent rehabilitation of prisoners because it is easier not to try. Our political process has come to exist at the expense of those it purports to serve.

God lurks within. Always count to ten. You know stuff. Ω

Good News

Editor's Note: The following article by The Sierra Club article can be found at: https://www.sierraclub.org/articles/2020/04/new-analysis-heat-pumps-slow-climate-change-every-corner-country.

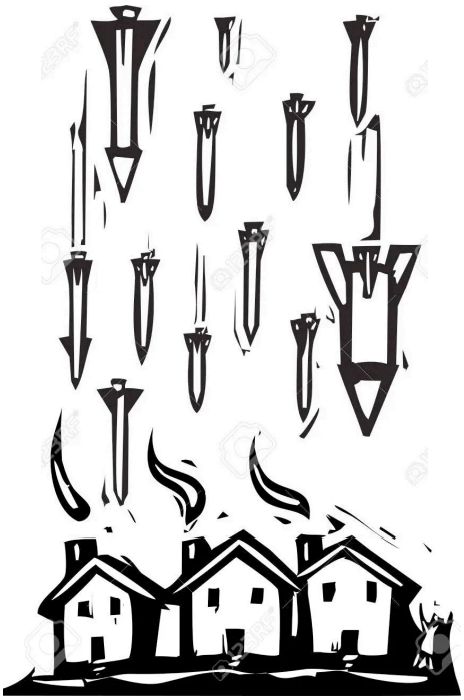
Driven by communities' desire for a stable climate and local clean energy, safer and healthier homes, and more affordable energy bills, we are seeing a movement for electric homes quickly spread across the US. More and more, people are becoming aware of the benefits of building electrification. Switching from gas to electric appliances is better for our health, improves the safety and resilience of our homes, and lowers energy bills.... Installing clean, electric heat pumps to replace gas water heaters or furnaces in every corner of the country cuts climate and health pollution. This is even true in states where coal and gas plants still power part of the electricity grid, and the climate benefits of electrification only improve as the grid continues to get cleaner over time.

The climate benefits of electrification are due to (1) the superior performance of heat pumps, which use at least three to four times less energy than gas appliances, and (2) the fact that electricity grids are already using significant amounts of renewable energy and will continue to get cleaner over the lifetime of a new electric appliance.

Electric heat pumps cut emissions in every state, especially when the grid is powered by clean energy.

Our analysis demonstrates that, while states with more ambitious clean energy deployment benefit the most, advanced electric appliances like heat pumps installed today will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in every state over the next 10 years of the appliance's life.

In fact, for the average house, installing electric heat pumps in place of a gas furnace and gas water heater will reduce heating emissions more than 45 percent over the next 10 years. That's the equivalent of cutting your gasoline car's carbon pollution by more than half.... Ω



We Lived Happily During the War

By Ilya Kaminsky

And when they bombed other people's houses,
we protested but not enough,
we opposed them but not enough.

I was in my bed,
around my bed America was falling:
invisible house by invisible house
by invisible house.

I took a chair outside and watched the sun.

In the sixth month
of a disastrous reign in the house of money
in the street of money in the city of money
in the country of money,
our great country of money, we (forgive us)
lived happily during the war. Ω

Editor's Note: Written in 2013..

Abortion

(Continued from Page 1)

Those Americans who voluntarily choose to practice Christianity or other religions and philosophies are free to embrace higher levels of self-sacrifice than those required by civil law. When Jesus invited followers to take nothing for the journey, to go the extra mile, to turn the other cheek, and to love enemies, he set extremely high moral standards, based on love, that transcend fairness and safety. Laws that tell gun owners they cannot carry semi-automatic weapons in or near schools fall within the category of safety. Laws that insist adolescent, impoverished or medically-compromised victims of abusive relationships and/or rape carry unwanted pregnancies to term are not only more complicated, but probably misogynist. (The law does not pursue fathers with similar vigor, if it pursues them at all.) While the unborn child of rape is an innocent victim entitled to protection, so is the girl or woman who was raped. A life-changing, sometimes life-threatening, burden is required of pregnant girls and women to save the lives of their unborn children. Jesus calls his followers to lay down their lives for others, but most people believe that's a sacrifice beyond what the state can compel.

Catholic Workers try to build a world where it is easier to take heroic stances and to persuade others by example and intellectual argument to take such actions. We believe threats of incarceration do not persuade those who feel the need to employ lethal force in self-defence, not women in crisis pregnancies nor residents of invaded countries like Ukraine. Defending the lives of everyone, despicable murderers, enemy soldiers, and unborn offspring of rapists is central to our religious vocation, but not something we can advance by laws. We believe that a world where the welfare of others is considered more precious than our own is one that can only be realized by a revolution of the heart. Ω

Letters

Hello Scott,

Thanks for your lead article, "Flags at Nativity School." As Catholics who are (presumably) followers of Christ, the real issue should be flying the American flag (or any national flag). The Christian has only one nation, the Kingdom of God. Jesus was clear: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other." It should be self-evidently clear that the kingdoms of this world are incompatible with Christ's Kingdom. The former are based on violence and justified hatred of enemies. The latter is based on love, unconditional love of all, friend and foe alike. The single most significant betrayal of Christ by the Church and its members is trying to do precisely what Christ said was impossible—that is serve two masters. Because of tha, we the Church are internally incoherent, proclaiming a saviour who lived and died nonviolently while justifying the violence and wars of the nations we inhabit.

It's a fundamental failure to witness to the truth of Jesus Christ.

In Christ our only true peace,

Paul del Junco
Toronto, Canada

Hi there Scott, Claire, family, community, guests and friends,

Thank you for faithfully sending out the *Radical*. Your "Mason Street Musings" rang a chord with me, Claire. Like you, I am often mesmerized by the glimpses of angels that make themselves known to us in nature. They are a beautiful blessing amidst our incredibly busy days filled with the needs of others.

As busy as life is, I have come to realize that it is vitally important to take those moments to admire the blossom angels, to spend time with grandchildren, (even if it means taking them along with me on my other missions), to put one's feet into the water of the river or ocean, or one's bare feet and hands into the soil.

After the passing of my husband's mother, we have moved into the family home so that we can keep it functioning as a hub for the family, and so we can be on call for the *marae* next door. Moving in was not something that we chose to do lightly. We technically knew the huge responsibility we were taking on. Though actually we had only glimpsed the tip of the iceberg. It was not an easy thing to move in here, despite the physical comforts this house provides, electricity, flushing toilet, washing machine, stove, insulation, etc. However, now that we have been here eight months, we are beginning to see the rewards too. Initially I was disheartened that I would need to start a garden from scratch all over again. Now, I realize that the river loam means the soil is incredibly more easy to break in than either of our last two gardens. Despite the fact that we have to snatch brief moments to be able to tend to the garden, over the eight months, we have gradually broken in a garden big enough to provide our vegetable needs, plus have plenty to share. The fact that we have a large lawn means we have a huge supply of mulch that means we do not need to weed or water often, so that garden is becoming easier and easier to manage as time goes on. Plus I am learning to mow the lawn more time efficiently. This house has a good selection of fruit trees, which provide well for our very large extended family. Again, because we utilize the lawn clippings as mulch, those trees have produced better than ever this year. Being here means it is much easier for family to drop in and/or stay. Being handy to the subtribe we are on call for all sorts of needs from officiating funerals, to intervening with domestics, to blessing houses, etc. However, it also means it is easy for those same people to drop in with an extra fish they have caught or a cut of wild meat, etc. But the best bit has been the bit that was the hardest for us at the start. This house is full of the memories of Waata's mother. Her spirit is strong here still. So, though we will still break down in tears after catching a glimpse or smell or memory of her, we feel her love around us too, and feel that we are not alone in this big work she has left for us.

So, thank you for sharing about the angels because we are all truly surrounded by them. We sometimes need to make the time to look for them and acknowledge them. Like the blossoms, if we don't take that moment to see them, the wind will blow them from our sight in such a short while. Let us celebrate the blessings bestowed upon us every day.

Sheri Waata
New Zealand

Hi, Scott,

Regarding the June/July *Catholic Radical*, I have 3 comments.

1) I think the otherwise excellent piece by Vasu Murti has a typo. It should, I think, say Amazon forest loss it 1,000 football fields/day, not 10,000.

2) You have no apologies to make for the greedy, dangerous Mr. [Robert] Kennedy. *The NYT Magazine* [May 25, 2022] has a very good exposé: "The Anti-Vaccine Movement's New Frontier."

A wave of parents has been radicalized by Covid-era misinformation to reject ordinary childhood immunizations — with potentially lethal consequences.

3) Let me also comment on what "immunity" means. For many diseases, vaccination confers immunity that is virtually 100% protective, such as measles, mumps, polio, smallpox, human cytomegalovirus, and others. Many are lifelong, some are very protective but do require periodic boosters, such as diphtheria, whooping cough, and tetanus.

However, in other cases, immunity means immune system activation that may not be perfect. When vaccines were introduced, they were never said to be 100% effective. It was 90+% effective, which was way better than infectious disease doctors expected. Still, they induced immunity that protected pretty well then, and now, from life threatening disease that requires hospitalization. Your statement that "the initial promise that COVID vaccines would produce

immunity have proven incorrect" is itself, incorrect. It was our overlooking and misunderstanding what statements of effectiveness meant, and of what immunity meant, that was incorrect.

Arthur Milholland, MD, PhD
Gaithersburg, Maryland

Editor's Note:. The Guardian *says 100,000 acres of rainforest in the Amazon are lost daily, which puts the loss at about 2,200 football fields. Other sources estimate higher. Suffice it to say, the loss is horrific.*

Dear Folks,
We thought your vaccine response was excellent.

Alice Budge & John Greenman
Columbus, Georgia

Hi, Scott,
I am writing to you today after the latest massacre of elementary school children. You can probably guess that I'm a strong proponent of stricter gun control, but I feel it's like the voice in the wilderness trying to be heard above all the ruckus. I came to my beliefs after my time in the Army, where I had to become proficient in firing the M-16 assault rifle and the Colt 45. I hated firing and carrying both—no wonder that I left when my three-year commitment was completed, and I would never consider owning any type of firearm.

I want to thank you again for sending the latest issue of *The Catholic Radical*. I especially appreciated your article, "Flags at Nativity School" and Aiden's artwork. I also lament that the Catholic Church has had 50 years to implement a comprehensive support network for women (of any faith and belief) who find themselves with an unwanted pregnancy. In my perfect world, it would include an 18-year commitment to providing financial, social, and spiritual support to anyone, married, single, or otherwise, who chose to keep their child, or to assist with an open adoption, if this were a better option. Instead, what I have witnessed or read seems to focus on shaming them, always forgetting that it takes a man and a woman to create a child.

Anyway, I will always be grateful that my [adopted] son's mom did not choose abortion, which gave me a chance to be a dad. But I cannot condemn others who chose a different path.

Mark Hamel
Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Hi , Scott,
I m doing a little step hoping to help people realize the danger of nuclear war that tops everything else. In a direct way, I am calling out the young people of the world to take the example of Samantha Smith [the 10-year-old from Maine who wrote to the Soviet leader in 1982 appealing for nuclear disarmament] and write letters to President Biden [1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, DC 103132] and President Putin [4 Staraya Square, Moscow, Russia, 103132].

The most important part is to send this message to all world wide social media connections. The world is in danger of a war. There is enough evidence to be fearful of what might come next if we keep our heads in the sand.

The children of the world are the future. I encourage all children to follow Samantha to change the future by asking presidents Biden and Putin to stop war and seek peaceful negotiations.

Dot Walsh
Newport, Rhode Island

To *The Catholic Radical*,
The mass shooting in a small town Texas grammar school has finally got my attention enough so to write.

War is a mass casualty event. Always. And, it is madness. Curiously, it is promoted as a national good by our government and much of the media. This incessant promotion of madness has an effect on our entire culture and population. The constant pretense that every war our government has engaged in was a war to defend freedom, liberty, democracy... is a canard. The culture of death is damaging and pernicious.

Put this together with the tribal politics in a country that has a 2nd Amendment and the seeds for confusion are sown. Now add the idea that a good chunk of our population buys into the idea that we have enemies. We need them to justify our war machine. We need them to justify our dehumanization of much of the world's inhabitants. We need them to justify the mistakes we make when our soldiers kill the "wrong" people. That means non-combatants. This need for enemies of our government trickles down. It contributes toward a philosophy of confrontation as a model for social behavior, the interaction between ordinary people in their everyday life. That, in turn, contributes to the idea that life itself is precarious, and susceptible at any time to dissolution.

We are living in a new era, a contagion of psychosis. Disaffected segments of the population are infected by it, leading to behavior with no rational explanation. It is a contagion of inexplicable acts of violence that take multiple lives in one fell swoop, oftentimes including the death of the perpetrator. This is what mass shootings are about.

Dave Bagoian
Worcester, Massachusetts

Catholic Worker Calendar

August , September - Evening Prayer: Please join us for prayer & Taize chant. 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow. 7 PM

Vigil to Remove ROTC from Holy Cross College_ September 14: Please join us on the feast of the Holy Cross to call for an end to military training. 11:30 AM-12:30 PM, on the steps of Dinand Library.

International Catholic Worker Gathering- October 21-23: Please mark your calendars now to set aside time to celebrate the Mustard Seed Catholic Worker's 50th anniversary and to look ahead as a movement. College of the Holy Cross, Worcester.

Mason Street Musings

Three years ago this week, while I was running a race, a driver in a blinding downpour put me in the hospital with multiple injuries. A year later, when I saw a photo of Claire kissing my bruised and bloody forehead in the hospital bed, my appearance prompted me to say, "Wow, that guy looks dead." Being prone to hyperbole, I have since then told people I died on July 22, 2019. When they look confused, I say, "I got better."

I'm told that I said crazy things as I came in and out of consciousness for the first couple of days after the crash, and I still have no memory of those days or the actual accident. I wonder if Lazarus remembered his death after Jesus called him out of the tomb. One thing seems clear to me, though, I'll bet he was darn grateful to get extra innings in the ball game of life. I know I am.

Like Scrooge, who against reasonable standards of justice, found himself, not in the clutches of the grim reaper, but alive and well in his own bed on December 25th, I want to shout, "I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me."

Saint Francis of Assisi by Dan Mauk

That kind of consciousness of the preciousness of each second of life is something contemplatives, Buddhists, and many others strive to achieve. Faced with abundant distractions, I, like most people, lapse into selfish, boring, even sinful behavior rather than treasuring each second as one that can change the world for the better.

As a freshman in college, I read an allegory by Plato in which the overwhelming majority of humans are prisoners chained in a cave, unable to turn their heads away from a wall. Behind them burns a fire. Between the fire and the prisoners there is a parapet, along which puppeteers walk. Because of our bondage, we mistake shadows for actual objects. Truly free people see and experience so much more.

I am so grateful that Claire, my children and grandchildren, siblings, friends, guests here at 52 Mason Street, my critics, and many of you readers, wake me when I start sleepwalking through life. With the example and help of these sisters and brothers, I am inspired to seize the day. Henry David Thoreau said it well in **Walden**: "...I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

In the last *Catholic Radical*, for the first time in two years, Claire made a financial appeal to which readers responded very generously. For the umpteenth time, I was reminded that when Jesus said, "**Fear is useless. What is needed is faith**," he meant it. In tangible ways, you show us what it means to love others as God loves everyone. We are humbled and very grateful. You remain in our prayers. Blessings! Ω

Scott

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